

A  
SERMON

Lately Preached

ON

I CORINTH. 3. 15.

BY

*A Reverend Divine of the  
Church of England.*

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Lincoln's Inn.*

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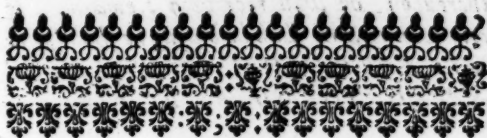


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1 COR. 3. 15:

*But he himself shall be Saved, yet so as by Fire.*

**T**HE Context runs thus. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me; as a wise Master-builder, I have laid the Foundation; and another, Buildeth thereon: But let every man take heed how he Buildeth thereupon. For other Foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. Now if any man Build upon this Foundation, Gold, Silver, Precious Stones, Wood, Hay, Stubble, Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it; But it shall be revealed by Fire, and the Fire shall try every mans work of what sort it is.*

B

If

*If any man's work abide which he hath Built thereupon, he shall receive a Reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; BUT HE HIMSELF SHALL BE SAVED, YET SO AS BY FIRE.*

**I**N these Words the Apostle speaks of a sort of Persons, who held indeed the Foundation of *Christianity*, but Built upon it such *Doctrines* or *Practices* as would not bear the *trial*; which he expresseth to us by *Wood, Hay, and Stubble*, which are not *proof* against the *Fire*. Such a person, the Apostle tells us, hath brought himself into a very dangerous state, though he would not absolutely deny the *possibility* of his *Salvation*; *He himself shall be saved, yet so as by Fire.*

That by *Fire* here, is not meant the *Fire of Purgatory*, as some pretend (who would be glad of any shadow of a Text of Scripture to countenance their own dreams) I shall neither trouble you nor my self to manifest.

It is very well known, that this is a Proverbial phrase, used not only in Scripture, but in prophane Authors, to signify a *narrow escape out of a great danger*. He shall be saved, yet so as by Fire, *διὰ πυρός*, out of the Fire. Just as *δι' ὕδατος*



τῷ is used 1 Pet. 3. 20. where the Apostle speaking of the eight persons of Noah's family, who escap'd the Flood, διεσωσαν δι' ὕδατος, they escaped out of the Water. So here this phrase is to be rendered in the Text, *He himself shall escape, yet so as out of the Fire.* The like expression you have, Amos 4. 11. *I have plucked them as a Firebrand, out of the Fire.* And Jude 23. *Others Save with fear, plucking them out of the Fire.* All which expressions signifie the greatness of the danger, and the difficulty of escaping it. And so the Roman Orator \* (who, it is likely \* Tully did not think of Purgatory,) useth this phrase; *Quo ex judicio, velut ex incendio, nudus effugit;* From which Judgment or Sentence he escaped naked, as it were out of a burning. And one of the Greek Orators \* tells us, That, to save a \* Aristides, man out of the Fire, was a common proverbial speech. And thus St. Chrysostom interprets this very place, *He shall escape as one that escapes out of the Fire, that is, (saith he) as one who when his house at midnight is set on Fire, wakes and leaps out of his Bed, and runs naked out of the doors, taking nothing that is within along with him, but imploying his whole care to Save his body from the flames.*

B 2

From

From the Words thus explained, the Observation that naturally ariseth is this. *That men may hold all the Fundamentals of Christian Religion, and yet may superadd other things whereby they may greatly endanger their Salvation.* What those things were, which some among the *Corinthians* Built upon the Foundation of Christianity, whereby they endanger'd their Salvation, we may probably conjecture, by what the Apostle reproves in this Epistle as the tolerating of *Incestuous Marriages*, communicating in *Idol Feasts*, &c. And especially by the Doctrine of the false Apostles, who at that time did so much disturb the peace of most Christian Churches, and who are so often and so severely reflected upon in this Epistle. And what their Doctrine was, we have an account *Acts 15. viz.* that they impose upon the *Gentile Christians*, *Circumcision*, and the *Observation of the Jewish Law*, teaching that *unless they were Circumcised and kept the Law of Moses, they could not be saved.* So that they did not only Build these Doctrines upon Christianity, but they made them equal with the Foundation, saying, That *unless men be-tirved and practised such things, they could not be Saved.*

I shall at this time take occasion from this passage of the Apostles to consider these two things.

1. Some *Doctrines* and *Practices*, which have been built upon the *Foundation* of *Christianity* to the great hazard and danger of mens *Salvation*; And to be plain, I mean particularly, by the *Church of Rome*.

2. Whether our granting a *possibility* of *Salvation* (though with great hazard) to those in the communion of the *Roman Church*, and their denying it to us, be a reasonable argument and encouragement to any man to betake himself to that *Church*?

And there is the more reason to consider these things, when so many *seducing Spirits* are so active and busie to pervert men from the *Truth*; and when we see every day so many *Persons* and their *Religion* so easily parted. For this reason these two Considerations shall be the subject of the following Discourse.

I. First, We will consider some *Doctrines* and *Practices* which the *Church of Rome* hath built upon the *Foundation* of *Christianity*, to the great hazard and danger of mens *Salvation*. It is not denied

by the most judicious *Protestant*, but that the Church of *Rome* do hold all the Articles of the Christian Faith which are necessary to Salvation. But that which we charge upon them, as a just ground of our Separation from them, is, *the imposing of new Doctrines and Practices upon Christians, as necessary to Salvation*, which were never taught by our Saviour, or his Apostles; and which are either directly contrary to the Doctrine of Christianity; or too apparently destructive of a good Life. And I begin,

1. With their *Doctrines*. And, because I have no mind to aggravate lesser matters, I will single out four or five points of Doctrine, which they have added to the Christian Religion, and which were neither taught by our Saviour and his Apostles, nor own'd in the first ages of Christianity. And the

First which I shall mention, and which being once admitted, makes way for as many Errors as they please to bring in, is this, their *Doctrin of Infallibility*. And this they are very stiff and peremptory in, though they are not agreed among themselves, where this *Infallibility* is seated; whether

whether in the *Pope alone*, or a *Council alone*, or in both together, or in the *diffusive body of Christians*; But they are sure they have it, though they know not where it is.

And is this no prejudice against it? can any man think, that this *privilege* was at first conferred upon the Church of *Rome*, and that Christians in all Ages did believe it, and had constant recourse to it, for the determining of differences, and yet that that very Church, which hath enjoyed and used it so long, should now be at a loss where to find it? Nothing could fall out more unluckily, than that there should be such differences among them about that which they pretend to be the only Means of ending all differences.

There is not the least intimation in Scripture of this *privilege* conferr'd upon the *Roman Church*; nor do the Apostles, in all their Epistles, ever so much as give the least direction to Christians to appeal to the Bishop of *Rome* for a determination of many differences, which, even in those times, happen'd among them. And it is strange they should be so silent in this matter, when there were so many *occasions* to speak of it; if our Saviour had

plainly appointed such an *infallible Judge* of Controversies, for this very end, to decide the differences that should happen among Christians. It is strange that the *Ancient Fathers*, in their disputes with Hereticks, should never appeal to this *Judge*; Nay it is strange they should not constantly do it, in all cases, it being so short and expedite a way for the ending of Controversies. And this very consideration, to a wise man, is instead of a thousands arguments to satisfy him that in those times no such thing was believed in the whole world.

Now this *Doctrine of Infallibility*, if it be not true, is of so much the more pernicious consequence to Christianity, because the conceit of it does confirm them that think they have it, in all their other errors; and gives them a pretence of assuming an Authority to themselves to impose their own fancies and mistakes upon the whole Christian world.

2. Their *Doctrine about Repentance*. Which consists in confessing their Sins to the Priest; which if it be but accompanied with any degree of *Contrition*, does, upon *Absolution* received from the Priest, put them into a state of *Salvation*, though

though they have lived the most lewd and debauched lives that can be imagin'd; than which nothing can be more destructive of a good life. For if this be true, all the hazard that the most wicked man runs of his Salvation is only the danger of so *sudden a death*, as gives him no space for Confession and Absolution. A case that happens so rarely, that any man that is strongly addicted to his Lusts, will be content to venture his Salvation upon this hazard; and all the Arguments to a good Life will be very insignificant, to a man that hath a mind to be wicked, when Remission of Sins may be had upon such cheap terms.

3. The *Doctrine of Purgatory*. By which they mean a state of Temporary Punishments after this Life, from which men may be released and Translated into Heaven, by the Prayers of the Living and the Sacrifice of the *Mass*. That this Doctrine was not known in the Primitive Church, nor can be proved from Scripture, we have the free acknowledgment of as Learned and Eminent men as any of that Church; which is to acknowledge that it is a Superstructure upon the Christian Religion. And though in one sense

sense, it be indeed a building of *Gold* and *Silver* upon the Foundation of Christianity, considering the vast Revenues which this Doctrine ( and that of *Indulgences*, which depends upon it ) brings into that Church ; yet I doubt not, but in the Apostles sense, it will be found to be *Hay* and *Stubble*. But how groundless soever it be, it is too gainful a Doctrine to be easily parted withal.

4. The *Doctrine of Transubstantiation*. A hard word, but I would to God that were the worst of it ; the thing is much more difficult. I have taken some pains to consider other Religions that have been in the World, and I must freely declare, that I never yet, in any of them, met with any Article or Proposition, imposed upon the belief of men, half so unreasonable and hard to be believed as this is. And yet this, in the *Romish* Church, is esteemed one of the most principal Articles of the Christian Faith : though there is no more certain Foundation for it in Scripture, then for our Saviours being Substantially changed into all those things which are said of him, as that he is a Rock, a Vine, a Door, and a hundred other things.

But



But this is not all. This Doctrine hath not only *no certain Foundation* in Scripture, but I have a far heavier charge against it, namely, that it undermines the very Foundation of Christianity itself. And surely nothing ought to be admitted to be a part of the *Christian Doctrine*, which destroys the *reason* of our belief of the whole. And that this Doctrine does so, will appear evidently, if we consider what was the main Argument which the Apostles used to convince the World of the *truth of Christianity*. And that was this; *That our Blessed Saviour, the Author of this Doctrine, wrought such and such miracles, and particularly that he rose again from the dead*; And this they proved, because they were eye-witnesses of his Miracles, and had seen him and conversed with him after he was risen from the dead. But what if their senses did deceive them in this matter? then it cannot be denied, but that the main proof of Christianity falls to the ground.

Well! We will now suppose (as the Church of *Rome* does) *Transubstantiation* to have been one principal part of the Christian Doctrine, which the Apostles preached. But if this Doctrine be true,  
then

then all mens Senses are deceived in a plain sensible matter, wherein 'tis as hard for them to be deceived, as in any thing in the world ; For two things can hardly be imagin'd more different, than a *little bit* of Wafer, and the whole *Body* of a Man.

So that the Apostles perswading men to believe this Doctrine, perswaded them not to trust their Senses, and yet the Argument which they used to perswade them to this was built upon the direct contrary principle, that *mens Senses are not to be trusted*; For if they be not, then notwithstanding all the evidence the Apostles offer'd for the Resurrection of our Saviour, he might not be risen; and so the Faith of Christians was vain. So they that represent the Apostles as absurdly as is possible, *viz.* going about to perswade men out of their Senses, by vertue of an Argument, the whole strength whereof depends upon the certainty of Sense.

And now the matter is brought to a fair issue. If the testimony of *Sense* be to be relied upon, then *Transubstantiation* is false: If it be not, then no man is sure that Christianity is true. For the utmost assurance that the Apostles had of the truth  
of

of Christianity, was the testimony of their own Senses concerning our Saviours Miracles; and this Testimony every man hath against *Transubstantiation*. From whence it plainly follows, that no man (no not the Apostles themselves) had more reason to believe *Christianity* to be true, than every man hath to believe *Transubstantiation* to be false. And we who did not see our Saviour's Miracles (as the Apostles did) and have only a credible Relation of them, but do see the *Sacrament*, have less evidence of the *truth* of *Christianity* than of the *falsehood* of *Transubstantiation*.

But cannot God impose upon the Senses of men, and represent things to them otherwise than they are? Yes, undoubtedly. And if he hath revealed that he doth this, are we not to believe him? Most certainly. But then we ought to be assured that he hath made such a Revelation; which *Assurance* no man can have, the certainty of Sense being taken away.

I shall press the business a little farther. Supposing the *Scripture* to be a *Divine Revelation*, and that these words, [*This is my Body*] if they be in *Scripture*, must necessarily be taken in the strict and literal

literal sense, I ask now, What greater evidence any man has, that these words [*This is my Body*] are in the Bible, than every man has that the Bread is not chang'd in the Sacrament? Nay no man has so much; for we have only the evidence of *one* Sense that these words are in the Bible, but that the Bread is not chang'd we have the concurring Testimony of *several* of our senses. In a word, if this be once admitted, that the *Senses* of all men are deceiv'd in one of the most plain sensible matters that can be, there is no certain means left either to convey or prove a *Divine Revelation* to Men; nor is there any way to confute the grossest imposture in the World: For if the clear evidence of all mens Senses be not sufficient for this purpose, let any man if he can find a better and more convincing Argument.

5. I will give but one Instance more of their Doctrins. And that shall be, their *Doctrine* of *deposing Kings* in case of Heresie, and Absolving their Subjects from their Allegiance to them. And this is not a meer *Speculative Doctrine*, but hath been put in Practice many a time by the Bishops of *Rome*, as every one

one knows that is vers'd in History. For the Troubles and Confusions which were occasion'd by this very thing make a good part of the History of several Ages.

I hope no body expects that I should take the pains to shew, that this was not the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles, nor of the Primitive Christians. The *Papists* are many of them so far from pretending to this, that in some times and places, when it is not seasonable and for their purpose, we have much a-doe to perswade them that ever it was their Doctrine. But if *Transubstantiation* be their Doctrine, *this* is; for they came both out of the same Forge, I mean the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* the Third. And if (as they tell us) *Transubstantiation* was then establish'd, so was *this*. And indeed one would think they were Twins, and brought forth at the same time, they are so like one another, that is, both so monstrously unreasonable.

II. I come now in the *Second* place, to consider some *Practices* of the Church of *Rome*, which I am afraid, will prove as bad as her *Doctrines*. I shall instance in these Five.

i. Their

1. Their celebrating of their Divine Service *in an Unknown Tongue*. And that not only contrary to the practice of the Primitive Church, and to the great end and design of Religious Worship, which is the Edification of those who are concerned in it, (and it is hard to imagine how men can be Edified by what they do not understand) but likewise in direct contradiction to *St. Paul*, who hath no less than a whole Chapter, wherein he confutes this Practice as fully, and condemns it as plainly, as any thing is condemned in the whole Bible. And they that can have the face to maintain that this Practice was not condemned by *St. Paul*, or that it was allowed and used in the first Ages of Christianity, need not be ashamed to set up for the defence of any Paradox in the world.

2. The Communion *in one kind*. And that notwithstanding that even, by their own acknowledgement, our Saviour instituted it in Both kinds, and the Primitive Church administered it in both kinds. This I must acknowledge is *no addition* to Christianity, but a *Sacrilegious taking away* of an Essential part of the Sacrament. For the *Cup* is as Essential a  
part

part of the Institution as the *Bread*; and they might as well, and by the same Authority, take away the one as the other, and both as well as either.

3. Their Worshipping of *Images*. Which practice ( notwithstanding all their distinctions about it, which are no other but what the *Heathens* used in the same case) flies as full in the face of the *Second Commandment*, as a *deliberate* and *malicious killing* of a man is against the *Sixth*. But if the Case be so plain, a man would think that at least the Teachers and Guides of that Church should be sensible of it. Why, they are so, and afraid the people should be so too; And therefore in their ordinary *Catechisms* and *Manuals* of Devotion, they leave out the *Second Commandment*, and divide the *Tenth* into two to make up the number, lest if the common people should know it, their Consciences should start at the doing of a thing so directly contrary to the plain Command of God.

4. The worshipping of the *Bread* and *Wine* in the Eucharist, out of a false and groundless perswasion, that they are *substantially changed*, into the *Body* and  
C *Bloud*

*Bloud of Christ.* Which if it be not true, (and it hath good fortune if it be, for certainly it is one of the most incredible things in the whole world) then, by the confession of several of their own learned Writers, they are guilty of *gross Idolatry.*

5. The Worship and invocation of *Saints* and *Angels*; and particularly of the *Virgin Mary*, which hath now for some Ages been a principal part of their Religion. Now a man may justly wonder that so considerable a part of Religion, as they make this to be, should have no manner of foundation in the Scripture. Does our Saviour any where speak one word concerning the worshipping of Her? Nay, does he not take all occasions to restrain all extravagant apprehensions and imaginations concerning the Honour due to Her, as foreseeing the degeneracy of the Church in this thing? When he was told that his Mother and Brethren were without: *Who* (says he) *are my Mother and my Brethren?* *He that doth the will of my Father, the same is my Mother, and Sister, and Brother.* And when the Woman brake forth into that rapture concerning the blessed Mother of our Lord



Lord ; *Blessed is the Womb that bear thee, and the Paps that gavethee suck !* Our Saviour diverts it to another thing ; *Yea rather, blessed are they that bear the Word of God and keep it.* Does either our Saviour or his Apostles in all their Precepts and directions concerning Prayer, and the manner of it, and by whom we are to address our selves to God, give the least intimation of Prayer to the Virgin *Mary*, or making use of her Mediation ? And can any man believe, that if this had been the *Practice* of the Church from the beginning, our Saviour and his Apostles would have been so silent about so considerable a part of Religion ? Insomuch, that in all the Epistles of the Apostles I do not remember that her name is so much as once mentioned ? And yet the worship of her in the Church of *Rome* is a main part of their Publick Worship ; yea and of their Private Devotion too, in which it is usual with them to say *ten Ave Marias* for one *Pater Noster*, that is, for one Prayer they make to Almighty God they make ten addresses to the blessed Virgin, for that is the proportion observed in their Rosaries. He that considers *this* and had never seen the *Bible*, would have been apt to think, that there had

been more said concerning *Her* in Scripture, than either concerning *God*; or our Blessed *Saviour*; and that the New-Testament were full from one end to the other of Precepts and Exhortations to the worshipping of her; and yet when all is done, I challenge any man to shew me, so much as one sentence in the whole Bible that sounds that way. And there is as little in the Christian Writers of the first Three hundred years. The truth is, *this practice* began to creep in among some Superstitious people about the middle of the *fourth Century*; And I remember particularly, that *Epiphanius* who lived about that time, calls it, the *Heretic of Women*.

And thus I have given you some Instances of several *Doctrines* and *Practices*, which the Church of *Rome* have built upon the Foundation of *Christianity*. Much more might have been said of them; but from what hath been said, any man may easily discern how dangerous they are to the Salvation of men.

I proceed now in the Second place.

II. To consider whether our granting a possibility of Salvation, though with  
great

great hazard, to those in the communion of the *Roman Church*, and their denying it to us, be a sufficient argument and encouragement to any man to quit our Church and go to theirs. And there is the more need to consider this, because this is the great *popular Argument*, where-with the Emissaries and Agents of that Church are wont to assault our people. *Your Church* (sayes they) *grants that a Papist may be Saved; Ours deny that a Protestant can be Saved: therefore it is safest to be of our Church, in which Salvation, by the acknowledgement of both sides, is possible.*

For answer to this, I shall endeavour to shew that this is so far from being a *good Argument*, that it is so intolerable *weak and sophistical*, that any considerate man ought to be ashamed to be catch'd by it. For either it is good of it self, and sufficient to perswade a man to relinquish our Church, and to pass over to theirs, without entering into the Merits of the Cause on either side, and without comparing the Doctrines and Practices of both the Churches together, or it is not. If it be not sufficient *of it self* to perswade a man to leave our Church, without Comparing the Doctrines on both sides, then

it is to no purpose, and there is nothing got by it. For if upon examination and comparing of Doctrines, the one appear to be *true*, and the other *false*, this alone, is sufficient inducement to any man to cleave to that Church where the true Doctrine is found, and then there is no need of this Argument.

If it be said, that this Argument is good in it self, without the examination of the Doctrines of both Churches, this seems a very strange thing for any man to affirm, that it is reason enough to a man to be of any Church, what ever her Doctrines and Practices be, if she do but damn those that differ from her, and if the Church that differs from her do but allow *a possibility of Salvation* in her Communion.

But they who use this Argument, pretend that it is Sufficient of it self; and therefore I shall apply my self to shew, as briefly and plainly as I can, the miserable *weakness & insufficiency* of it, to satisfy any mans Conscience or prudence to change his Religion. And to this end I shall,

1. Shew the weakness of the *Principle* upon which this Argument relies.

2. Give

2. Give some *parallel Instances* by which it will clearly appear that it concludes false.

3. I shall take notice of some *gross absurdities* that follow from it.

4. Shew how unfit it is to work upon *those* to whom it is propounded. And

5. How improper it is to be urged by those that make use of it.

1. I shall shew the *weakness* of the *Principle* upon which this Argument relies. And that is this: *That whatever different Parties in Religion agree in is safest to be chosen.* The true consequence of which Principle, if it be driven to the head, is to perswade men to forsake Christianity, and to make them take up in the Principles of *Natural Religion*, for in these all Religions do agree. For if this Principle be true, and signifie any thing, it is dangerous to embrace any thing wherein the several parties in Religion differ; because that only is Safe and Prudent to be chosen wherein *all* agree. So that this Argument, if the Foundation of it be good, will perswade further than those who make use of it desire it should do: for it will not only make men forsake the *Protestant Religion*,

but *Papery* too, and, which is much more considerable, *Christianity* it self.

2. I will give some *parallel Instances*, by which it will clearly be seen that this Argument concludes false. The *Donatists* denied the Baptism of the *Catholicks* to be good, but the *Catholicks* acknowledged the Baptism of the *Donatists* to be valid. So that both sides were agreed that the Baptism of the *Donatists* was good; therefore the safest way for *St. Austin* and other *Catholicks* ( according to this Argument ) was to be Baptized again by the *Donatists*, because by the acknowledgment of both sides Baptism among them was valid.

But to come nearer to the Church of *Rome*. Several in that Church hold the *personal Infallibility of the Pope*, and the *lawfulness of deposing and killing Kings for Heresie*, to be *de fide*, that is, necessary Articles of Faith, and consequently, that whoever does not believe them, cannot be Saved. But a great many *Papists*, though they believe these things to be no matters of Faith, yet they think those that hold them may be Saved, and they are generally very favourable towards them. But now according to this Argument

ment, they ought all to be of their opinion in these points, because both sides are agreed, that *they that hold them may be Saved*; but one side positively sayes, that *men cannot be saved if they do not hold them.*

But my Text furnisheth me with as good an Instance to this purpose as can be desired. St. Paul here in the Text, acknowledgeth the *possibility* of the *Salvation* of those, *who built Hay and Stubble upon the Foundation of Christianity*; that they *might be Saved*, though with great difficulty, and as it were, *out of the Fire*. But now among those Builders with Hay and Stubble, there were those who denied the possibility of St. Paul's Salvation, and of those who were of his mind. We are told of some who Built the *Jewish Ceremonies and Observances upon the Foundation of Christianity*, and said, that unless men were Circumcised and kept the Law of *Moses*, they could not be Saved. So that by this Argument St. Paul and his followers ought to have gone over to those *Judaizing Christians*, because it was acknowledged on both sides, that they might be Saved: But these *Judaizing Christians* were as uncharitable to St. Paul and other Christians,

as the Church of *Rome* is now to us ; for they said positively that they could not be Saved. But can any man think, that *St. Paul* would have been moved by this Argument, to leave a safe and certain way of Salvation, for that which was only possible, and that with great difficulty and hazard ? The Argument, you see is the very same, and yet it concludes the wrong way ; which plainly shews, that it is a *contingent Argument*, and concludes uncertainly and by chance, and therefore no man ought to be moved by it.

3. I shall take notice of some *gross Absurdities* that follow from it. I shall mention but these two.

1. According to this Principle, it is always safest to be on the *uncharitable side*. And yet uncharitableness is as bad an evidence, either of a true Christian or a true Church, as a man would wish. *Charity* is one of the most Essential marks of Christianity, and what the Apostle saith of particular Christians, is as true of whole Churches ; that *though they have all Faith, yet if they have not Charity, they are nothing*.

I grant that no Charity teacheth men to see others Damned, and not to tell them  
them



them the danger of their condition. But it is to be consider'd, that the damning of men is a very hard thing, and therefore when ever we do it, the case must be wonderfully plain. And is it so in this case? They of the Church of *Rome* cannot deny, but that we embrace all the Doctrines of our Saviour and his Apostles; whatever is contain'd in the Apostles Creed, and determin'd by the Four first General Councils; And yet they will not allow this, and a good Life, to put us within a possibility of Salvation; because we will not submit to all the Innovations they would impose upon us. And yet I think there is scarce any *Doctrine* or *Practice*, in difference between them and us, which some or other of their most learned Writers have not acknowledged, either not to be sufficiently contained in Scripture, or not to have been held and practis'd by the Primitive Church; so that nothing can excuse their uncharitableness towards us. And they pay dear for the little advantage they get by this Argument; for they do what in them lies, to make themselves no Christians, that they may prove themselves the truer Church; A *medium* which we do not desire to make use of.

2. If

2. If this Argument were good, then by this trick a man may bring over all the World to agree with him in an Error, which another does not account Damnable, what ever it be; provided he do but damn all those that do not hold it, and there wants nothing but *confidence* and *uncharitableness* to do this. But is there any sense, that another mans boldness and want of Charity should be an Argument to move me to be of his opinion? I cannot illustrate this better, than by the difference between a skilful Physician and a Mountebank. A *learned* and *skilful* Physician is modest, and speaks *justly* of things: He sayes that such a method of Cure which he hath directed is safe, and withal, that that which the Mountebank prescribes, may possibly do the work; but there is great hazard and danger in it. But the *Mountebank* who never talks of any thing less than *Infallible Cures* (and always the more Mountebank, the stronger pretence to Infallibility) he is *positive* that that Method which the Physician prescribes will destroy the Patient, but his Receipt is Infallible, and never fails. Is there any reason in this case, that this man should carry it, meerly by his *confidence*? And yet if this Argument

gument be good, the safest way is to reject the Physicians advice, and to stick to the Mountebanks ; For both sides are agreed, that there is a possibility of Cure in the Mountebanks method, but not in the Physicians ; and so the whole force of the Argument lies in the *confidence* of an *ignorant man*.

4. This Argument is very unfit to work upon *those* to whom it is propounded : For either they believe we say true in this, or not. If they think we do not, they have no reason to be moved by what we say. If they think we do, why do they not take in all that we say in this matter ? Namely, that though it be possible for some in the Communion of the *Roman Church* to be Saved yet it is very hazardous ; and that they are in a safe condition already in our Church ; and why then should a *bare possibility*, accompani'd with infinite and apparent hazard, be an Argument to any man to run into that danger ?

Lastly , This Argument is very improper to be urged by those who make use of it. Part of the strength of it lies in this, that we *Protestants* acknowledge that it is possible a *Papist* may be Saved.

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But why should they lay any stress upon this? what matter is it, what we Hereticks say, who are so damnably mistaken in all other things? Methinks, if there were no other reason, yet because we say it, it should seem to them to be unlikely to be true. But I perceive, when it serves for their purpose, we have some little Credit and Authority among them.

By this time I hope every one is in some measure satisfied of the *weakness of this Argument*, which is so transparent, that no wise man can honestly use it, and he must have a very odd Understanding that can be cheated by it. The truth is, it is *a casual and contingent Argument*, and sometimes it concludes right, and oftener wrong: and therefore no prudent man can be moved by it, except only in one case; when all things are so equal on both sides, that there is nothing else in the whole World to determine him; which surely can never happen in matters of Religion necessarily to be believed. No man is so weak, as not to consider in the change of his Religion, the *merits of the Cause it self*; to examine the *Doctrines and Practices* of the Churches  
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on both sides; to take notice of the *confidence* and *Charity* of both Parties, together with all other things which ought to move a conscientious and a prudent man. And if upon enquiry there appear to be a clear advantage on either side, then this Argument is needless, and comes too late, because the work is already done without it.

Besides, that the great hazard of Salvation in the *Roman Church*, (which we declare upon account of the *Doctrines* and *Practices* which I have mentioned) ought to deter any man much more from that Religion, than the acknowledged possibility of Salvation in it, ought to encourage any man to the embracing of it: Never did any Christian Church build so much Hay and Stubble upon the Foundation of Christianity; and therefore *those that are Saved in it, must be Saved*, as it were, *out of the Fire*. And though *Purgatory* be not meant in the Text, yet it is a Doctrine very well suited to their manner of Building; for there is need of an *Ignis purgatorius*, of a Fire to try their work, what it is, and to burn up their Hay and Stubble. And I have so much Charity (and I desire alwaies to have it) as to hope, that a great many among  
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them who live piously, and have been almost inevitably detain'd in that Church by the prejudice of Education and an invincible ignorance, will upon a *general Repentance* find mercy with God; and though their work suffer loss and be Burnt, yet *they themselves may escape as out of the Fire*. But as for those who have had the opportunities of coming to the knowledge of the Truth, if they continue in the Errors of that Church, or Apostatize from the Truth, I think their condition so far from being safe, that there must be extraordinary favourable circumstances in their case to give a man hopes of their Salvation.

I have now done with Two things I propounded to speak to. And I am sorry that the *necessary defence* of our Religion, against the *restless importunities* and *attempts* of its Adversaries upon all sorts of persons, hath engaged me to spend so much time in matters of Dispute, which I had much rather have employed in another way. Many of you can be my witnesses, that I have constantly made it my business, in this Great Presence and Assembly, to plead against the *Impieties* and *Wickedness* of men; and have endeavoured, by the best Arguments I could think

think of, to gain men over to a *firm belief* and *serious practice* of the main things of Religion. And, I do assure you, I had much rather perswade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or Denomination of Christians whatsoever. For I doubt not but *the belief of the Ancient Creed*, without the addition of any other Articles, *together with a good Life*, will certainly *Save a man*; and without this no man can have reasonable hopes of Salvation, no not in an Infallible Church, if there were any such to be found in the World.

I have been, according to my opportunities, not a negligent observer of the *Genius* and *Humour* of the several Sects and Professions in Religion. And upon the whole matter, I do in my conscience believe the Church of *England* to be the best constituted Church this day in the World; and that, as to the main, the *Doctrine*, and *Government*, and *Worship* of it are excellently framed to make men *soberly Religious*: Securing men on the one hand from the wild freaks of *Enthusiasm*; and on the other, from the gross follies of *Superstition*. And our Church hath this peculiar advantage above several Professions that we know

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in the World, that it acknowledgeth a due and just Subordination to the *Civil Authority*, and hath alwaies been untainted in its *Loyalty*.

And now shall every trifling consideration be sufficient to move a man to relinquish such a Church ? There is no greater disparagement to a mans Understanding, no greater Argument of a light and ungenerous Mind, than rashly to change ones Religion. *Religion* is our greatest concernment of all other, and it is not every *little Argument*, no nor a great noise about *Infallibility*, nothing but very *plain* and *convincing evidence*, that should sway a man in this case. But they are utterly inexcusable, who make a change of such concernment upon the insinuations of one side only, without ever hearing what can be said for the Church they were Baptized and brought up in, before they leave it. They that can yield thus easily to the Impressions of every one that hath a design and interest to make *Profelytes*, may at this rate of discretion change their *Religion* twice a-day, and instead of *Morning* and *Evening Prayer* they may have a *Morning* and an *Evening Religion*.

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Therefore, for Gods sake, and for our own Souls sake, and for the sake of our Reputation, let us consider and *shew our selves men* ; Let us not suffer our selves to be shaken and carried away with every wind ; Let us not run our selves into danger when we may be safe. Let us stick to the *Foundation of Religion*, the *Articles of our Common belief*, and Build upon them Gold, and Silver, and precious Stones, I mean, the *vertues and actions of a good Life* ; and if we would do this we should not be apt to set such a value upon *Hay and Stubble*. If we would sincerely endeavour, to live *holy and virtuous lives*, we should not need to cast about for a *Religion* which may furnish us with easie and indirect wayes to get to Heaven.

I WILL conclude all with the Apostles Exhortation. *Wherefore my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, alwayes abounding in the work of the Lord.*

**N**OW the God of peace which brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, by the Bloud of the Everlasting Covenant,

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make you perfect in every good work to  
do his will; working in you that which is  
well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus  
Christ, to whom be Glory for ever and ever,  
Amen.

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THE END.

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